

Refuge Facts:

- Established: J.N. "Ding" Darling NWR
December 1, 1945
- Acres: 5,220 Fee Title
- Located: in Lee County, FL.
- Other management: Management Agreements with State of Florida
950-acre Tarpon Bay
184-acre State Botanical Site
- Total refuge acreage 6,354.
- Most of the refuge lies within the jurisdiction of the City of Sanibel.
- Location: the refuge is located approximately 15 miles southwest of Ft. Myers FL, on Sanibel Island.
- Satellite refuges administered as part of the complex :
Pine Island NWR
Caloosahatchee NWR
Island Bay NWR
Matlacha Pass NWR

Natural History:

- The refuge is made up of several habitat types: estuarine habitat consisting of open water, sea grass beds, mud flats and mangrove islands, and interior freshwater habitats consisting of: open water ponds, spartina swales, and west Indian hardwood hammocks/ridges. Two brackish water impoundments totaling 800 acres are managed for mosquito control and are used extensively by waterfowl and wading birds.
- Two thousand eight hundred and twenty five (2,825) acres of the refuge have been designated as Wilderness Area.
- Several threatened and endangered species benefit from the habitats described: eastern indigo snakes, American alligators, American crocodiles, bald eagles, wood storks, peregrine falcons, west Indian manatees, and Atlantic loggerhead turtles.

The refuge has a large diversity of species. Approximately 238 bird species have been identified utilizing refuge habitats, as well as 51 species of reptiles and amphibians and 32 species of mammals.

Financial Impact of Refuge:

- 16 full time employees.
- 5 full time non-refuge FWS employees.
- 9 seasonal/temporary employees.
- 4 student employees.
- 850,000 visitors annually.
- 240+ volunteers contributing equivalent of 10 full time employees.

- Current budget (FY 04) \$2,961,300.

Refuge Objectives:

- To join in partnership with the residents of Sanibel and Captiva Islands, Lee County and State of Florida to safeguard and enhance over 7,300 acres of pristine subtropical habitat for the benefit of wildlife.
- To protect and provide suitable habitat for endangered and threatened species including the American crocodile, west Indian manatee, wood stork, eastern indigo snake and bald eagle.
- To implement sound wildlife management techniques to provide feeding, nesting and roosting habitat for a wide diversity of shore birds, wading birds, waterfowl, raptors and neo-tropical migratory species.
- To provide high quality interpretive and environmental education programs in order to develop within each refuge visitor an appreciation of fish and wildlife ecology and to provide quality wildlife-oriented recreation compatible with the purposes for which the refuge was established.

Management Tools:

- Water management.
- Prescribed fire
- Law enforcement.
- Wildlife population surveys.
- Visitor management .
- Partnerships.
- Education and interpretation.
- Concession operations/management.
- Chemical and mechanical control of invasive exotic plants.

Public Use Opportunities:

*****Wildlife Drive is closed to all public access on Fridays*****

- Visitor Center.
- 5-mile auto tour route.
- Fresh and salt water fishing.
- Hiking trails.
- Tram service.
- Canoe and kayak rentals.
- Guided interpretive programs.
- Wildlife observation tower.
- Wildlife photography.